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COAS appointment

Shehbaz lashes out at PTI over 'smear campaign'

Says Imran Khan violating the constitution by dragging institutions into his "dirty" politics; PDM decides to deal strictly with law breakers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday censured Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for brazenly attempting to tarnish the reputation of Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir. Taking to Twitter, the Prime Minister said: "PTI's disgusting smear campaign against Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir at the behest of Imran Niazi is deserving of the strongest condemnation." The campaign against the COAS was intolerable and the continuation of a conspiracy against the national institutions, according to a PM Office press release. Throwing yet another brickbat at the PTI chairman, the premier said: "This man Niazi [Imran Khan] is stooping to unprecedented lows in his desperation for power & going to the extent of damaging the country & undermining our armed forces & their leadership." The prime minister urged overseas Pakistanis to raise their voice against the "foreign-funded" campaign. He said as the dirty political game was being played through the expatriates, they should not

Police given 'free hand': CM Naqvi

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has declared that the police have been given "a free hand" to deal with the PTI hooligans and the writ of the government will be established at any cost. Addressing a news conference in Lahore on Monday, Mohsin Naqvi also announced to constitute a joint investigation team (JIT) to probe the violent

incidents that took place outside Zaman Park in Lahore. "The JIT will investigate the incidents within six to seven days," he added. He categorically stated that he would not let this happen that the policemen kept suffering beating at the hands of political vandals. "I have instructed the officials that they can do whatever they want if they are subjected to violence," Naqvi said asserting that

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version in the country. Meanwhile, the PDM decided to deal with law breakers strictly. The PDM parties that met with Prime Minister in the chair reached a consensus that those who will take law in their hands will not be spared. The session continued for six long hours. The meeting also discussed the security situation of the country and holding of elections in two provinces.



ISLAMABAD: Fatih Kemal Ebicliglu, Chairman Dawlance alone with a delegation call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on March 20, 2023. - DNA

Imran politics harming Pakistan: Bilawal



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Monday said former Prime Minister Imran Khan's politics of hatred is harming the country. This was stated by the Foreign Minister while addressing the foundation stone ceremony of Zulfikar Bhutto Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases today. He said Pakistan is going through a political, economic and security crisis. Bilawal Bhutto said the part Imran Khan played in the destruction of Pakistan is a part of history now. He said the previous government of PTI had cheated on the budget of Punjab while in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab fraud was going on in the name of Health Card. PPP Chairman Bilawal said at a young age, he created the world's largest network for the treatment of heart diseases while PTI's previous government did not establish a hospital in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The PPP chairman said free treatment is being provided to the poor and the rich people in Sindh and patients from other provinces of the country also come to Sindh for treatment. During the ceremony, he highlighted the importance of National

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Imran Khan alleges Plan was hatched to assassinate me in Judicial Complex

Says PDM is trying to pit PTI against army

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan claimed on Monday that a plan was hatched to assassinate him inside the Judicial Complex. Addressing a speech via video link, the deposed premier claimed, "If I went inside the Judicial Complex, these people could assassinate me. My companions had signaled me to depart. The objective of the 20 people present in the Judicial Complex was to assassinate me. Our lawyers were subjected to torture inside the Judicial Complex." Mr Khan urged the Chief Justice to hold an investigation over the "20 people presented in the Judicial Complex". He also appealed to the Chief Justice to hold hearings of cases against him via video link, requesting that the Chief Justice to see what was going on in the country. The country's history did not witness such brutality as it did in the tenure of the incumbent government, lamented Mr Khan. He took a dig at the Pakistan Democratic Movement

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PTI did not run any campaign, says Fawad

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice President Fawad Chaudhry has said that his political party did not run any campaign against the army chief, media reported on Monday. Fawad Chaudhry, while talking to the journalists today, said that PTI respects the army chief and it did not run any campaign against him. He said that the country cannot bear the consequences of ethnic riots. He asked the caretaker Punjab chief minister Mohsin Naqvi to give his statements carefully instead of playing with the fire. He said that Naqvi should give balanced statements and refrain from supporting the violence.

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Technical reasons behind IMF delay

Dar says nuclear programme not a reason

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar Monday blamed "technical reasons" behind the delay in the stalled International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme's revival, claiming that no strings were attached regarding the country's nuclear programme to the loan. Pakistan has been hosting an IMF mission since early February to negotiate the terms of the deal, including the adoption of policy measures to manage its fiscal deficit ahead of the annual budget due around June. The funds are part of a \$6.5 billion bailout

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package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical if Pakistan is to avoid defaulting on external debt obligations. Veteran politician Senator Raza Rabbani had raised concerns about whether the delay in the staff-level agreement with the Fund has anything to do with the country's strategic assets, including the nuclear and missile programmes. In response to Rabbani's concerns, Dar had on the floor of the Senate stated that the coalition government would not compromise on its nuclear programme for reviving the stalled IMF loan facility.

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Briefs

Maryam takes a dig at Khan

DNA



LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz assailed on Monday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying the latter was now talking about peace after terrorists resided in Zaman Park. Taking to Twitter, Mr Nawaz launched a fresh salvo at the deposed premier, saying, "Now he realises that he will be dealt with iron hands". "Imran Khan is now speaking about peace after police mobiles were attacked and dozens of policemen were injured. Not only this, but petrol bombs were also used, and terrorists lived in Zaman Park," she bashed Mr Khan.

Ex-Saudi envoy Asseri urges political leaders to reconcile differences

Argues that current political polarization ripping the nation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr Ali Asseri, the former Saudi ambassador to Pakistan, has appealed to the political leaders in the government and the opposition to reconcile differences in the larger national interest. In his article published by the Arab News, he argued that current political polarization is ripping the nation when it is facing the most severe economic crisis in history. "With political conflict and economic crisis reinforcing each other, the end result can only be disastrous. Averting this eventuality requires a renewed spirit of reconciliation and restraint by all political players and state institutions," he wrote. During his decade-long tenure (2001-09), Saudi Arabia and Pakistan worked closely in the War on Terror. Ambassador Asseri also played a key role in political reconciliation between the Musharraf regime and the exiled PML-N leadership in the Kingdom. He was recently in Islamabad on a private visit. In his opinion, no country can economically



progress unless its political system is stable. Political stability ensures continuity of economic policy. Unfortunately, the surge of populism has polarized politics and society. This dangerous trend must reverse. "There is an urgent need for building a bare minimum consensus on the core issues of national agenda pertaining to economy, national security, and foreign policy.

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CJP urges to set aside differences

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial on Monday said that there should be a rule of law in the country and sacrifices should be made for development. While addressing the ceremony in Quetta, Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial said that the establishment of the new building will improve the attainment of justice. "May Allah help us in making the decisions according to the constitution and law, the building has no importance but the delivery of justice is the basis," said Chief Justice of Pakistan.

Let us cross our fingers for democracy!!

In the given circumstances we are left with no option but to hope and pray that things do not get out of control. In any such eventuality democracy, no matter what sham, shall be the biggest loser

COMMENT

ANSAR M BHATTI



THE recent developments that everybody witnessed in the past few days should not augur well for the future of democracy in Pakistan. Actually there has never been a true democratic system in place here perhaps ever since the inception of this country and the sham democracy that we have been cherishing has simply failed to deliver the goods. The Constitution of Pakistan too is unable to provide relief to the hapless ones simply because it has never been followed in letter and spirit. The 'might is right' mantra has always ruled supreme. Probably that is why at times both the military and political leader-

ship had to think about introducing the Presidential form of government with this hope that this system might help in improving the governance and turning the huddle into a nation. But all such plans could not work. And they cannot work because we need to change faces as well along with the system. The government, supported by other stakeholders, is trying its best to get the Punjab and KP elections postponed or delayed and the emerging political scenario suggests as if the government is close to achieving this end. When it comes to holding elections hardly there are any voices that would go against this idea. However there is also a consensus that a political dialogue is a must in order to pave the way for agreement on the issue of elections for which all political forces need to sit together. Even the PTI Chairman hinted at a possible dialogue with the government and sources claim some back channel diplomacy

is already in progress spearheaded by the Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani from the government side but on the other hand it also remains a fact that the way the PTI leadership is being treated would make it difficult for the mediators to do any wonders. Implication of Imran Khan in almost hundred cases and rounding up of the senior PTI leadership are ostensibly not the steps that can lead to any confidence building measures. Talk-talk, fight-fight policy won't serve anybody's purpose. When Imran Khan got bail in seven cases within a short span of time it appeared as if the back channel contacts had done the trick but then what happened in Islamabad Judicial Complex and at the Zaman Park while the PTI chief was appearing before the court in Islamabad dashed all hopes of a rapprochement. After that incident things seem to have reached back to square one. Even in this case, efforts for reconciliation must not stop because that is the only way to sort

our differences in a democratic manner. Countries like America and Saudi Arabia have also called upon the stakeholders in Pakistan to reach an agreement to end the ongoing impasse. The former Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Ali Asseri wrote an article yesterday in which he urged the political and military leadership to find a way out of ongoing economic and political crises. "With political conflict and economic crisis reinforcing each other, the end result can only be disastrous. Averting this eventuality requires a renewed spirit of reconciliation and restraint by all political players and state institutions," he wrote in his article. The delay in the IMF tranche is giving birth to weird conspiracy theories. Just yesterday the Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the delay in the IMF agreement was due to some technical reasons and they were in constant touch with the Fund in order to get the tranche through. The IMF perhaps wants some

sort of political stability before the staff level agreement. The government on the other hand is dying for this agreement because its political future is at stake. The friendly countries too have declined to help before the staff level agreement. Only China is showing some benevolence by extending small amounts, which of course, are not enough to prop up the sagging economy and fast depleting foreign exchange reserves. Things are getting worse with each passing day. The PTI has announced a public procession at Minar-e-Pakistan tomorrow. The PTI plans to put up a huge power show provided it is allowed by the Lahore administration to hold this gathering. Disallowing the procession may further aggravate the already charged political situation. In the given circumstances we are left with no option but to hope and pray that things do not get out of control. In any such eventuality democracy, no matter what sham, shall be the biggest loser.

KP Govt announces Ramadan flour package

PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Food and Irrigation, Fazal Elahi has said that despite financial hardships, the provincial government as per directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced a package of Rs.19.77 billion for the provision of free flour to the people.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said that about 92% population of the province will take benefit of the package. Caretaker Minister for Information, Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Secretary Food Abid Wazir was also present on the occasion. The provincial minister said that more than 17.2 million kilograms of flour bags will be distributed among the deserving families of the province during the month of Ramadan.—APP

Court Notice

In the Court of Medum Saira Zaia Civil Judge Gujrat
Title: Khalil Ahmad etc. Versus Tanveer Ahmad etc.
Notice to:

Toqeer Ahmad S/o. Nazir Ahmad Late R/o. H#13 Ghorian Gujrat, Mehmooda Toqeer D/o. Nazeer Ahmad Late R/o. H#7B Mehmood Shaheed Road Shahdara Station Lahore, Khadeeja Iqbal D/o. Nazeer Ahmad Late R/o. 685B Pak Arab Society Lahore, Munir Ahmad Late S/o. Fazal Ahmad through here Muhammad Musa Son, Ismaa D/o. Munir Ahmad Late R/o. Gulbar II Muratib Ali Road Lahore Presently Residing Canada, District Excise & Taxation officer Gujrat. Suit for Partition of Land Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 15-04-2023, otherwise case will be decided ex party.

Court Notice

In the Court of Medum Afshan Younas Civil Judge Gujrat
Title: Mian Azmat Ali. Versus Abdul Rasheed etc. Notice to: 1A-Masooma Kanwal, 1B-Farzana Kanwal Daughters Abdul Rasheed, 1C-Waqar ul Hassan, 1D Zameer ul Hassan Sons Abdul Rasheed R/o. Street Hakeem Jameel Shahdouda Wahdat Abad Gujrat., 2-ETO Gujrat. Application for Declaration with consequential Relief

Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 30-03-2023, otherwise case will be decided ex Court Reporter Gujrat

CENTRELINE again elected as Executive Committee member

Nazafreen, Sarmad Ali elected President, Secy General of APNS

Imtinan Shahid elected Senior Vice President, Aslam Kazi Vice President, Shahab Zubairi Finance Secretary, Munir Jilani Joint Secretary



DNA

KARACHI: The Annual Meeting of the APNS General Council held on March 20, 2023 at APNS House, Karachi unanimously elected Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani as President, Imtinan Shahid as Senior Vice President, Muhammad Aslam Kazi as Vice President, Sarmad Ali as Secretary General, S.M. Munir Jilani as Joint Secretary and Shahab Zubairi as Fi-

nance Secretary of the Society.

The AGM was held under the chairmanship of Mr. Sarmad Ali, President of the Society. The Council unanimously approved the report of the Executive Committee for the year 2022-2023 as well as the Annual Accounts of the Society for the year 2022.

The General Council attended by 128 members from across the country, formed an Election Commission headed by Dr.

Waqar Yousuf Azeemi with Nasir Daad Baloch and Mumtaz Ahmed Phulpoto as members. The Election Commission conducted the election of the Executive Committee for the year 2023-24.

Following dailies and magazines were elected unopposed to the Executive Committee of the APNS for the next tenure: Daily Aghaz, Daily Business Recorder, Daily Deyanat, Daily Dawn,

Daily Jasarat, Daily Jiddat (Khi), Daily Abtak, Daily Dunya, Daily Jang, Daily Khabrain, Daily Pakistan, Daily Tjarat, Daily Ausaf, Daily Sahafat, Daily Awam (Quetta), Daily Mashriq (Quetta), Daily Mashriq (Peshawar), Daily Wahdat, Daily Kawish (Hyd), Daily Kaleem (Sukkur), Daily Aftab (Multan), Daily Paigham, Daily Business Report, Daily City 42, Daily Pakistan Observer, Daily Halchal (Hyd) and Daily Sayadat, Month-

ly Dastak, Nawa-i-Waqt, Monthly Naey Ufaq, Monthly Naya Rukh, Monthly CENTRELINE, Fortnightly Ibrat Magazine and Weekly Nikhar were elected on periodical seats. The new Executive Committee elected Mrs. Zahida Abbasi of Daily Nau Sijj, Karachi on woman - publishers seat. The newly elected Executive Committee appreciated the performance of the Election Commission. The AGM in a resolution,

expressed its profound concern on the state of print media due to the present economic situation which has caused severe financial crisis for newspapers, many of them are at the verge of collapse. In this situation, the media expected support from the government to brave the financial crunch. The AGM urged upon the Federal Government to pay the long outstanding dues of newspaper industry amounting to over Rs.2

billion, increase the quantum of advertisements and allocate a separate share of print media in the advertising budget so that the newspaper industry would be able to survive in the present situation. The AGM reiterated that the Federal Government has not yet implemented the recommendation of 8th Wage Board to increase the government advertising rates in proportion increase in the wages despite various assurances.

Canadian aid agency to establish food testing laboratory in GB

DNA

GILGIT: Canadian Aid agency will establish first-ever food testing laboratory in Gilgit-Baltistan, National Programme Manager, Nutrition International, Zameer Haider announced. He made this announcement while addressing a day-long workshop in Gilgit. The workshop was organized by Nutrition International in collaboration with the Food department Gilgit. On the occasion, Secretary Food Gilgit-Baltistan Momin Jan who chaired the workshop said that the Gilgit-Baltistan government has taken a significant step towards improving the nutritional status of its people by mandating the fortification of edible oil with

vitamins A and D. This move is expected to significantly reduce the incidence of vitamin A and D deficiencies in the region, which are prevalent in the region. Secretary Food GB said that the fortified oil will be available in the market at an affordable price, and the government is committed to set up a regulatory authority to ensure that the fortification process will be implemented effectively. The authority will monitor the production, import, and marketing of fortified oil and will ensure that it meets the required standards, he added. He said said the government was trying to improve the health and well-being of its people and this initiative was a

step in that direction. He added that the government is also planning to fortify wheat flour with iron and folic acid, which will further enhance the nutritional value of the food consumed by the people of the region. On the occasion Zameer Haider National Program Manager Nutrition International over-viewed the Nutrition International Large Scale Food fortification program initiative in Pakistan including the objective of the session. Nazia Shuja Nutrition Officer Health department government of Gilgit-Baltistan said that the state of malnutrition in Gilgit-Baltistan is alarming as there is no such authority which will readdress the issue. She said the role of

the health and Nutrition department in addressing mental child and adolescent health and nutrition issues in the region can't be ignored. This move has been welcomed by health experts and nutritionists of national fortification alliance and nutrition International who have long been advocating for the fortification of food items in the Pakistan. They believe that this will go a long way in addressing malnutrition and related health issues in the area. Fortified edible oil has already been made mandatory in several other countries, including the United States, Canada, and India, with positive results in terms of reducing micronutrient deficiencies.

Two killed, 5 injured in two separate incidents

On getting information, two ambulances of 1122 reached and shifted all the victims to the tehsil headquarter hospital Jand

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK Couch operator lost his breath and five other passengers injured when an over speeded Toyota hiace rammied into a tree along the inter provincial border road Near Dahak more Kohat Pindi highway within the jurisdiction of police station Jand of district Attock here on

Monday. Rescue sources said that a passenger coach collided a standing tree when the reckless operator lost his control Dahak narrow turn of Kohat Pindi Road of tehsil Jand. As a result, the hiace operator identified as 54 years of Sher Afzal lost his breath on the spot while 45 years Saeed Khan son of Mohammad Nawaz, Yasir Khan (29 years) son Rehman ullah Mohammad Shakeel

(33 years) son of Mohammad Nawaz, Mazhar Hussain (50 years) son of Bakhsh Khan and Khalid Naveed (45 years) so of Ahmed Khan sustained injuries. On getting information, two ambulances of 1122 reached and shifted all the victims to the tehsil headquarter hospital Jand. Later on, the dead body of coach operator was handed over to his real heirs after completing all legal formalities.

Ruet body to meet on Wednesday in Peshawar

ISLAMABAD :The meeting of Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee for sighting the crescent of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak 1444 AH would be held on Wednesday, March 22, corresponding Shaban-ul-Moazzam 29, in the building of Auqaf Department, Peshawar. However, the meetings of Zonal/District Ruet-e-Hilal Committees would be held at their respective headquarters at

the same time. Similarly, the meeting of Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Islamabad Capital Territory would be held at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, said an official notification received by APP on Monday.

Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Moulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad would announce the decision of

cresecent sighting or otherwise subsequently on the basis of information received to this end. It is worth mentioning here that the committee besides members of the Ruet body would be comprised of representatives of religious scholars, Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission, Pakistan Meteorological Department, Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. Earlier, Religious Affairs Secretary Dr Afab Akbar Durrani expressed the hope that the new crescent of the holy month of Ramadan would

be announced after forging consensus with all stakeholders. He said there was a proper mechanism for moon sighting and the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee had always taken provinces on board into the matter. Secretary Durrani said the committee had never been disrespectful to anyone and performed its job mandate professionally. Meanwhile, the PMD had forecast the possibility of Ramadan moon sighting on March 22, (29th Sha'ban 1444 AH). It said the new moon of Ramadan 1444 AH was expected to be born on the crossing conjunction point at 22-23 PST on March 21.—APP

Alvi calls for development of intellectual resources

KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi, on Monday, stressing on development of intellectual resources for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan on sustainable grounds, said that there was enormous potential of promoting innovation in the country. Promoting innovative ideas, focus on health and education sectors, timely adoption of and adaptation to emerging technologies as well as setting up right priorities and prudent political decision making were key to steer the nation on path of development, the president noted while addressing National Idea Bank Grand Finale ceremony held here at Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology Karachi to distribute prizes to winners of the national contest of innovative ideas. Dr. Arif Alvi said that new ideas and innovation played an important role in human evolution and paved the way to the destination of

advancement and progress. He added that the development of intellectual resources was vital for the sustainable advancement of the country besides the development of natural resources. The country intending to develop always sets health and education as its topmost priorities as a sound healthcare system ensure the physical and mental well-being of the nation and an all-inclusive and modern education system caters its requirement for intellectual strength, he observed. The information technolo-

gy was the fastest growing sector across the world which encompasses all other sectors of fundamental importance like finance, manufacturing, agriculture, education and health, he said adding that Pakistan could jump in the fastest moving development vehicle of IT by promoting ideas of our youth in the IT sector and creating intellectual advantage in IT. The president said that over 22 million children in Pakistan were out of school while information technology platforms could be utilised to enhance the literacy ratio

particularly for promoting higher education and technical and vocational training. Currently services of 3.4 million IT experts were required around the world while 200 billion Internet of Things (IoT) were expected to be available in the IT spectrum in the coming year, Dr. Arif Alvi said and noted that Pakistan could acquire a considerable share out of the available opportunities by focusing on the IT sector. The federal Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Aminul Haque addressing

the ceremony said that the core objective of 'Ideas Bank' was to collect innovative ideas. He said that 60 percent of 220 million population of the country was comprised of youth and it was an asset that has to be utilised and promoted by equipping them with modern technologies for expediting the process of national progress. The IT ministry has started Karachi IT Park project while an MoU has been inked to establish a centre of excellence in Gaming and Animation at NED University Karachi, he said adding that IT exports from the country has crossed \$ 3 billion and government was determined to further enhance the volume. Chancellor Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology Javed Anwar said that universities should promote entrepreneurship among their students by nurturing new ideas—APP



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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

Forgotten Rohingya refugees

The hungry and desperate are now much more so. Last month, the rations to Rohingya living in the world's largest refugee camp - Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh - were slashed. Another drastic cut is due next month. This is, as a UN expert warned, a matter of life and death. The Rohingya have lived on a knife edge for too long.

Their suffering made global headlines in 2017, when the Myanmar military, supported by militias, launched a murderous campaign that took thousands of lives, forced 700,000 to flee Rakhine state for Bangladesh and was described by a UN human rights expert as genocide. In the last two years, what little attention has been paid to Myanmar has focused on the military's coup and attempts to crush civilian resistance. But the suffering of the Rohingya began decades ago and continues to this day, even outside Rakhine state. Many had fled before, returning (not always by choice) when they were assured it was safe. It was not. They experienced discrimination and repression, military operations, pogroms and the stripping of their citizenship. "There was no peace ... wherever they went," the Guardian journalist Kaamil Ahmed writes in his new book, *I Feel No Peace: Rohingya Fleeing Over Seas and Rivers*. "The Rohingya have run from the Burmese troops who kill them to their Bangladeshi counterparts, who have policed their lives in a different way, looming over them in their exile then turning the screw when governments decide they need to return to Myanmar." Conditions in Bangladesh have become so poor that the number attempting dangerous sea crossings to Malaysia or Indonesia increased five-fold last year, to more than 3,500, at the cost of around a tenth of those lives. Earlier this month, a huge blaze tore through one of the camps at Cox's Bazar, leaving an estimated 12,000 people without shelter - the latest in a series of fires endangering lives and destroying the meagre possessions that the refugees can still muster. Dhaka wants UN help to move more Rohingya to Bhasan Char, an island highly vulnerable to cyclones. Officials portray it as an opportunity for a fresh start; refugees have described dangerous and prison-like conditions. The Rohingya have reason to be cynical about the UN, given the refugee agency's previous treatment of them. The World Food Programme says it needs \$125m (£103m) just to avoid further ration cuts in a community where malnutrition is already rife. The US has pledged \$26m (£21m), but overall the response has been lacklustre. The UK's promise of a £5m package does not come close to compensating for the cuts it imposed when it slashed the aid budget in 2021. What the Rohingya ultimately need is citizenship in Myanmar to safely return when they wish to, but failing that, resettlement would allow them to establish new lives and flourish instead of dwelling in perpetual insecurity. They need not only food now, but a future.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

US' Democracy summit

Washington is due to host its second so-called Summit for Democracy on March 29-30, despite its first such gathering that it held last year being widely seen as a farce. By doing so, it aims to split the world into "democracies and non-democracies" based on whether countries meet the standards of the US-style democracy or not. Although as the report, *The State of Democracy in the United States: 2022*, the Chinese Foreign Ministry released on Monday, indicates, based on the US' own performance last year, meeting its standards should not be something countries take pride in. The report says the vicious cycle of democratic pretensions, dysfunctional politics and a divided society continued to plague the US last year. Problems such as money politics, personality politics, social rifts, and the gulf between the rich and poor worsened. The maladies afflicting the US political system have deeply infected US society, and further revealed the failure of its governance and institutional defects. But what makes these problems a real challenge to the country is Washington's unwillingness to address them. At the same time, it has never stopped putting on airs and graces, pointing fingers at others, adopting the role of a "lecturer on democracy", and concocting and hyping up the false notion of "democracy versus authoritarianism". Be it the high-sounding rhetoric or the divisive summit, it is all part of the US' so-called value diplomacy, which is nothing more than a highfalutin misnomer for its attempts to maintain its hegemony by playing bloc politics and using democracy as a tool for political ends. The US doctrine of democracy is not the last word on democracy, although it would have the world believe otherwise. Although democracy is a common value of humanity, there is no single political system that is applicable to all countries in the world. Worse, a black-and-white division of countries as "democratic" or "authoritarian" is both anachronistic and arbitrary. What the world really needs is a conference of solidarity that focuses on taking real actions to solve prominent global challenges. Democracy is not the exclusive patent of the US. And the world does not need the political, military, and ideological barriers of a new Cold War. As President Xi Jinping pointed out when he proposed the Global Civilization Initiative on Wednesday, the practice of stoking divisions and confrontations in the name of democracy is in itself a violation of the spirit of democracy. The initiative calls on countries to keep an open mind when perceiving countries with different cultures and political systems and to refrain from imposing their own values or models on others or stoking ideological confrontations. As Xi said, a single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden. Rather than seeking to create divisions, countries should enhance their exchanges and interactions so as to tend the garden of the world so that it becomes more "colorful and vibrant".



Imran Khan and the beleaguered government

Qamar Bashir



She perhaps marked everyone who ever had a little connection or soft corner for Imran.

She insulted former Chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar for declaring Imran Khan truthful and trustworthy and demanded court martial of former DG, ISI for his alleged support to first bring Imran Khan to power and then playing a part in perpetuating his rule for around four years. She boycotted all TV channels who, according to her, were supporting Imran Khan in their talk shows and had a calculated narrative that the journalists should not side with any political party. Interestingly, in various speeches she vowed

The entire nation is reeling from the developments on the political, economic, financial, and security fronts, but the government, state machinery, and political assets have only one problem at hand, which is to arrest Imran Khan. To reduce his political size, change his software, either eliminate him entirely, or reintroduce him as a tamed, reformed, and toothless politician like any other politician in the country. The government and political leaders seemed totally numb to the cost the country may have to pay if things that are already mostly out of their control spiral out of control completely. Instead of calming the highly charged political atmosphere, Maryam Nawaz spewed once again lethal venom against Imran Khan in her latest press conference and interview with a reputable channel and her favourite host. She compared him to a jackal and a mouse who is holed up in his Lahore residence and using a human shield to avoid arrest and production in court. She charged him with harbouring terrorists in his residence who are using petrol bombs which according to her are only those who know the sophisticated technology to make petrol bombs, conveniently ignoring that it needs only a bottle, a cock and matchbox to launch a petrol bomb. She also accused him of using GB police to defend himself against his arrest, and transferred GB IGP Muhammad Saeed as a punishment without waiting for input from Punjab IG, who when asked denied any clash between Punjab and GB police adding that GB policemen had not pointed their guns at Lahore police personnel. Later, when asked how Imran could physically attend court hearings against over 96 FIRs filed on frivolous grounds, she innocently responded that he should go to the court and tell them that the FIRs are false. She may be unaware that making false allegations and filing baseless FIRs are punishable offenses under PPC Section 182, which states that anyone who intentionally gives false information shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding ten thousand rupees,

or both and according Section 211 filing a false police report or making false allegations against an offense is punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to two years, a fine, or both. I believe she is astute enough to assess these provisions and take the necessary precautions to avoid future problems.

In her press conference, she was flanked by top PML(N) leaders and the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, who could only get a seat in the far right corner of the head table. It reflected Maryam's complete control over the government and the party. She was effectively acting as a de facto prime minister, making decisions without fear of being held accountable. She makes statements, makes promises, and issues orders, all of which fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Prime Minister and party leader, Shahbaz Sharif, who has been dwarfed and is only left to inaugurate half-baked and half-cooked development projects. This concentration of power in Maryam appeared to have completely trampled the norm of separation of government and party affairs, which is a rule in all democracies around the world. According to universal principles, the government is in charge of enforcing policies and laws, whereas political party leaders are in charge of developing and promoting their party's platform and values. The government should ideally be independent of political party leadership, and decisions should be made in the best interests of the country rather than the interests of a specific party or individual. However, in our case, the lines between government and political party leadership are frequently blurred, and we have seen that the ruling party wields significant power over the government. This is a dangerous combination, and it is possible that it is the root cause of the country's current political turmoil as power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Her obsession with arresting and imprisoning Imran Khan knows no bounds. She is using all of her arrows and weapons in her bow to ensure Imran's arrest, regardless of the political, administrative, or financial cost. She has designated him as her No. 1 enemy, as well as all those she perceives as supporting him, whether he is a person, a country, or an institution.

In her recent press conference, she criticized Zalmie Khalilzad, perhaps unaware that he is an American diplomat and foreign policy advisor who has served in a number of high-level positions in the United States government and has been involved in US foreign policy for several decades. He has also held senior positions in the US State Department, including Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs and Counterterrorism Coordinator. Whatever the circumstances and her feelings about Khalilzad, I believe she should have left it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to respond if deemed appropriate; after all, the Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs should share some of the burden of the all-powerful Maryam Nawaz. But is Khalilzad the only one she has a grudge against?

She perhaps marked everyone who ever had a little connection or soft corner for Imran. She insulted former Chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar for declaring Imran Khan truthful and trustworthy and demanded court martial of former DG, ISI for his alleged support to first bring Imran Khan to power and then playing a part in perpetuating his rule for around four years. She boycotted all TV channels who, according to her, were supporting Imran Khan in their talk shows and had a calculated narrative that the journalists should not side with any political party.

Interestingly, in various speeches she vowed to not hold any general elections until both sides of the balance are equal which according to her is equated only with putting Imran Khan behind bars whether rightly or wrongly as counterbalancing to her and her father's going to jail. By pledging this, she self assumed herself over and above the election commission, judiciary, establishment and the government. Constitutionally election commission is responsible for holding of election, supreme court of Pakistan which in her latest ruling have directed the government to hold the election as soon as possible and government which is constitutionally bound to hold election as and when demanded by the Election Commission or by the supreme court of Pakistan, but she put each one of them under her foot by declaring if not in so many words that it is she who will decide when and how the elections will be held in the country, an amazing confidence and an amazingly exuberance of power. Perhaps she should pause, reset her strategy,

and take a step back to wait for the right movement to strike against Imran, as he is currently riding high on the popularity tide, and his fate is currently in the hands of people, if not under him. He has inspired the public to share his vision and work towards a common goal by articulating a clear and compelling vision and a deep sense of purpose. He has emerged as a gifted speaker who is able to use language in a powerful and persuasive manner to inspire his followers and is regarded as a role model and source of inspiration. Even in the face of uncertainty or adversity, he has taken risks such as dissolving the Punjab and KP assemblies against all opposition from within his party. He is not afraid to challenge the status quo and raise people's emotions to new heights. He has successfully sold his narrative of Haqiqi Azadi, demonstrated his fearlessness in the face of state power, and his ability to rally his supporters, who took to the streets in large numbers to oppose the use of any state power against him. Finally, as Maryam herself stated in so many words, he still enjoys the establishment's support and loyalty, which is an important factor and still helps him to neutralize the state's brute power. The movement he started has now gained its own momentum, which he may not even be able to control at this point. It is similar to a popular soap opera or television series that takes time to capture people's attention before establishing its own moment that is controlled by the viewers rather than the producer.

She, who is a good political leader, should only attack from a position of strength in order to minimize casualties, increase the chances of victory, establish deterrence, and protect her party's interests. This strategy will enable her to redeploy her tactics and exploit the Imran's weaknesses, which can be critical to achieving her objectives. Instead of pressuring his arrest, she should allow him to make mistakes by manipulating the media and persuade voters to support her over him through clear messaging and strong branding. She has to bring new potent arsenal as the existing weapons, like Tyrian White, hiding terrorists, pitching GB police against Punjab police, using drugs, chicken hearted have been blunted by Imran and have left no utility and effectiveness.

On the other hand, I have nothing but admiration for Maryam, who has very successfully created a dense fog wall between the people and the burning issues that the government is faced with and its failure to handle any of them through her anti-establishment, anti-judiciary, and anti-Imran rhetoric. Imran's focus has shifted from his demand for early elections to protecting himself, avoiding arrest, and preventing updates of his software. People's attention has been diverted from the unprecedented price hike and hyperinflation to protect Imran Khan from his imminent arrest, businessmen are on hold awaiting the final outcome of the elephant war where they may be grass to be trampled, failure of negotiation between demoralized finance minister and stone faced IFM country director who has been stung by the overturning of agreement reached between them and Mufthah Ismael by Ishaq dar is allegedly refusing to sign any agreement until new and legitimate government take over to guarantee implementation of the agreement in both letter and spirit. Nation's attention has also been diverted from the imminent threat to our nuclear programme, which was revealed by a statement made by our finance minister at an international forum with body language that reflected weakness, despair, lack of confidence and legitimacy in front of a completely hostile audience, which was disheartening. Businesses are currently under enormous pressure, production lines are closing down, industry is being shifted to greener pastures due to a lack of raw materials and exorbitant utility prices, people are groaning under price hikes, and the less fortunate are even committing suicide to save themselves and their loved ones from starvation and the indignity of abject poverty and despair. Instead of political expediency, turmoil, commotion, and unrest, which the government has purposefully created, the government could have avoided this dire situation by showing a large heart and committing its collective wisdom, intellect, and abilities to bring reforms and provide some relief to the people. Both Maryam and Imran Khan, unfortunately, have been calling the establishment in their support and have repeatedly expressed their anger and frustration at the army's insensitivity to their demand and siding with them.

Unfortunately, our politicians are so addicted to this toxicity that none of them are willing to believe the army's pledge to no longer interfere in political and civilian affairs. They are also unwilling to believe that the army's new leadership has demonstrated its neutrality in the face of the nation's political and financial challenges. They are also ignoring the President's advice that politicians should take the army's pledge of neutrality at face value and work together to devise ways and means to fill the void left by them. I believe it will take time for politicians to wean themselves from this lethal seduction, and it will also take time for the army to demonstrate to the people and politicians that it is no longer in the civilian domain. Only time will tell whether Maryam and Imran, our most popular leaders, will take the first step in devising their political strategies independently, without relying on the establishment's support in achieving their political goals.

Out of our entire political leadership of both old and new generations, Maryam has the grit, courage, tenacity and stamina to stand against rising tides with confidence and determination to win against all odds. She will probably stay for a long time in the political arena of Pakistan. She has gone through a tough and arduous political training process and endured imprisonments and the tedious process of facing the courts. While the rest of PDM leadership is relishing the power bestowed to them by change of fate as a one in lifetime chance, she is the only one left who is facing the daunting challenge of Imran Khan and successfully engaging the people to convey her political objectives.

But now she, the government and the establishment are faced with a new kind of rising tide which is rooted genuinely in the people's heart and soul. They are dancing to the tune of Haqiqi Azadi to salvage themselves from the brute state power which is used on them as and when required with total impunity. Unlike other such tides of the past orchestrated by the establishment this one is different, genuine and spontaneous. The people have risen to the realization that the ultimate power rests with them only when they unite to a single cause built around dignity, self respect and honor and is the only way to confine the state machinery to its mandated roles and responsibilities. The jurisdiction of both civilian and military bureaucracy are defined in so many words in the constitution and laws, rules and regulations emanated out of it. No state functionary or institute has the authority or power to come out of its defined parameters. Any step out of these confines would be illegal, illegitimate and detrimental to the national interests which gives the people who are actual owners of the country and land inherent right to put them back to their assigned rules by using their power of collectiveness. The latest events demonstrated clearly that people are not ready to accept any illegal act or order of the government or the courts. They have taken on themselves to protect their right and defend their leaders totally disregarding the danger of use of brute state force on them.

The country is currently confronted with new and emerging realities. We must all recognize that political unrest is the root cause of all the nation's problems. All political leaders must pause, grasp new realities, comprehend the newly defined role of the establishment, devise political strategies that exclude the establishment, and begin engaging the people by providing them with a motive, a purpose, and objectives that truly represent their aspirations, dreams, and preferences. Use people's power to keep the bureaucracy both civilian and military to their defined rules, use political tools of negotiation, consultations and consensus building to resolve issues faced by the nation. Set a mutually agreed-upon date for the next general election to allow the people to elect a legitimate, genuine, and truly representative government, and then allow it to complete its mandate period while using all political capital at their disposal to prevent any interference by state machinery in the civilian domain. Let us set aside our personal grudges, hateful vendettas, and personal agendas and allow the nation and its people to breathe freely.

—The writer is the Former Press Secretary to the President and Former Press Minister in Pakistan Embassy of France

Briefs

Police given 'free hand': CM Naqvi

FROM PAGE 01

'the government writ will be established at any cost'. The chief minister narrated an incident in which a policeman was tortured badly (by the PTI workers) the other day when he was going back after finishing his duty. The PTI activists also threw the vehicle of Elite Force into the canal, he added. He told the presser that they have got pictures of those involved in these incidents of terrorism. "I'm standing by my police. If someone lays his hand on them, we will break his hand," the CM said forcefully. He said that the administration was trying to keep the atmosphere peaceful and wanted to avoid any loss of life. "No political workers do such things. Terrorists are residing in Zaman Park," Naqvi maintained. He said that he had given a free hand to the police to establish state's writ. The Punjab caretaker chief minister said that he would write a letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan on Monday apprising it of the situation. Naqvi also announced Rs500,000 compensation to the police officials who got hurt during incidents of vandalism by the PTI workers. Talking about providing some relief to poor masses during Ramadan, the chief minister said that free wheat flour was being supplied at thousands of distribution centres throughout Punjab. Naqvi said so far over 800,000 flour bags had been distributed. "Every family will be given three flour bags," he added.

Ex-Saudi envoy Asseri...

FROM PAGE 01

This consensus must be built after accommodating differences of opinion among the key stakeholders," Ambassador Asseri "Recovering the economy from the current crisis is a necessary choice. Support from trusted friends like Saudi Arabia will follow," he added. The former Saudi envoy also argued that all the political stakeholders must agree upon and adhere to some basic Rules of the Game and abide by them. "It is good that the military leadership has finally decided to stay away from politics. Now politicians have a huge responsibility to act maturely, respect each other and work for the greater public good." "The political parties need to sit together and develop a code of conduct for regulating political competition and resolving political conflict through compromise in the true spirit of national reconciliation," he further stated. Pakistan, he argued, is in dire need of a healing touch. It can count on Saudi Arabia, which wants to invest in the future of Pakistan. But the real momentum for economic recovery and political stability must come from within.

Plan was hatched to assassinate..

FROM PAGE 01

(PDM), saying the opponents will not win elections at any cost. "These people want my assassination. By shelling in the toll plaza, efforts were made to incite the PTI workers. I have mentioned many times that I am facing a threat to life. So why have I been summoned persistently", the former premier, bashing his political opponents. He went on to claim, saying, "If I am sent to jail, these people will assassinate me, there as well". Continuing to take a dig at the rulers, Mr Khan claimed, "They are resorting to tactics against me for their own sake. These people are not interested in holding elections. But they are in power to assassinate me". On Sunday, Mr Khan Sunday demanded release of party workers and their children arrested during police raids homes of PTI workers in Islamabad. In his message on Twitter, Imran Khan said: "Fascism at unprecedented levels with police in Islamabad raiding homes without warrants to abduct PTI workers. Where the worker is not present, children as young as 10 yrs are picked up."

Punjab wins National Women's Blind Cricket Championship title

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Punjab lifted the 2nd edition of National Women's Blind Cricket Championship by defeating Islamabad by 8 wickets here at Marghzar Cricket Ground on Monday. Teams from Punjab, Sindh, Azad Kashmir and Islamabad participated in a six days event organised by Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) with the collaboration of Australian High Commission (AHC) and Serena Hotels. In the final Islamabad scored 108 runs for the loss of four wickets in the allotted 12 overs. Asifa Jabeen and Iman Arshad scored 16 and 13 runs respectively for Islamabad. In reply, Punjab chased the target in 9.3 overs at the loss of two wickets. Nisha Bakhs was the main contributor as she scored 55 runs and was declared woman of the Match. Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins was the chief guest of prize distribution ceremony while First Secretary of Australian High Commission Ashleigh Light, Pakistan Blind Cricket Council Chairman Syed Sultan Shah, General Manager Islamabad Serena Hotel Otto Kurzendorfer, Manager Events (Head of Diplomacy Events) Serena Hotel Hassan Bukhtiar



and other dignitaries were also present during the ceremony. The training builds on Australia's support to PBCC since 2018 that led to the formation of Pakistan's first blind women cricket team. The new team played its first international Twenty20 game in the same year. Speaking at the award-giving ceremony at the conclusion of the event, the Australian High

Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins shared that Australia's support aims to provide more women and girls with disabilities the opportunity to compete and demonstrate their ability, while promoting inclusion in sport. "We hope to break gender stereotypes and negative perceptions associated with people with disabilities through our support of

this initiative. Australia and Pakistan share a passion for cricket, so we are happy to support the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council's efforts to bring women and girls living with disabilities into the sport," Hawkins added. The Chairman of Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, Syed Sultan Shah, said that blind Cricket is a sport that has gained popularity

in recent years for its unique approach to inclusivity. It provides an opportunity for people with visual impairments to compete at a high level, develop their skills and confidence, and become people of vision, both on and off the field. I hope that this initiative will inspire more people with disabilities to participate in sports and lead fulfilling lives."

Indian Wells

Alcaraz, Kazakhstan's Rybakina take home titles

President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev congratulated Elena Rybakina on her win at the prestigious Indian Wells tournament. Tokayev, said Rybakina showed highly professional tennis, a strong will, and high culture of sportsmanship



SPORTS DESK

INDIAN WELLS: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz defeated Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 6-2 on Sunday to win the BNP Paribas Open title and regain the world's No. 1 ranking. The 19-year-old Spaniard will move from second to first in the ATP Tour rankings on Monday, displacing Novak Djokovic. The Serb withdrew from Indian Wells

and handed the world's second-ranked player just her second loss this year. Last year, Alcaraz became the youngest man to reach No. 1 in ATP history after his title at the U.S. Open. He achieved another mark in the third round at Indian Wells. That's when Alcaraz notched his 100th career match victory, the second-quickest player behind John McEnroe to do so. Alcaraz also became the first man to win the tournament without dropping a set since Roger Federer in 2017 and the youngest man to win the title in the desert. "I really trust in every shot that I hit," he said. "If I miss, I don't mind." Alcaraz hit 19 winners and had 10 unforced errors while keeping Medvedev off-balance with a steady array of serve-and-volley and drop shots. The teenager never faced a break point while opening leads of 3-0 in the first set and 4-0 in the second. "What I improve a lot is to don't take the pressure, just to play relaxed," Alcaraz said.

Nepal's PM secures vote of confidence in Parliament

KATHMANDU: Nepal's communist prime minister secured a vote of confidence in Parliament on Monday, enabling him to continue as long as he has the backing of his new coalition partners. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal got 172 votes while 89 members voted against him in the House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament. Dahal became prime minister in December after elections a month earlier produced no clear winner. The first coalition government he put together fell apart after three major partners pulled out of because of differences on separate issues with Dahal. He was forced by law to seek a vote of confidence but managed to get the support of his former rival, the Nepali Congress party, which is the largest in Parliament. The party is now set to become a part of the new coalition government with several smaller parties. Political turmoil and frequent changes in government are nothing new in Nepal, where eight different governments have ruled in the past 10 years. - APP

Jhelum Chamber of commerce beat Jhelum Bar

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: Jhelum Chamber of Commerce and Industry won the friendly cricket match between Jhelum Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Jhelum District Bar Association. The team scored 140 runs in 20 over while playing first. Chaudhry Kamran Gujjar played a brilliant innings of 48 runs. In response, Jhelum District Bar Association could only score 137 runs. Mosadiq Kayani dismissed 4 players from Jhelum Chamber of Commerce.



The sacred month of Ramzan, month of Blessing

SAYED SAJID SHAH BOKHARI

WHEN month of Ramzan comes it gives immense pleasure to all the Muslims (1.5 Billion) of the world to celebrate it with great courage and love. The Humans involved in all sort of sins and busy in all kinds of ills requires forgiveness and Allah provides opportunity to the Muslims to avail it. Each cult with 70% double gratuities could be in fact chance for Muslims to boon them. Every year the Muslims of the world go through fasting (complete ban on food, drinks and other activities for bidden by Allah). Allah says that the entire cult the humans do for themselves but fasting is for me and I will give gratuities for it. The very first concept of fasting is no doubt getting the consent of Allah through begging. The outcome of Fasting is to get the spiritual qualities like compassion, empathy, humility, generosity, kindness and reverence. The world although do not fast being non-Muslim but they respect the month of Ramzan because of its worth. Even the scientists of the world had agreed, that due to huge pressure on human body thoroughly in a year and continuous eating, drinking saturate the human body with dirt which needs purification and rest and the Ramzan provide this opportunity on large scale. Although major objective of fasting is to make one strong in asceticism and understand strong beliefs in Allah. The Prophet

of Allah says, Fasting is a shield from the Hellfire just like the shield of any of you in battle. (Sunan ibni Maja, 1639). Fasting is the process to go again the lust and desires and to bow to the command of Allah fully. It gives perception to stay away from all kinds of sins and dirt in and outside a body and to make Allah accede the first priority. The major theme of Roza is to follow the Allah path in true version (do not eat and drink in day while at night one should stand in worship for the forgiveness of all evils). In fact this month purify the bodies and soul, blood and brain and fill them with the love and affection of Allah. Ramzan is one of the five pillars of Islam (faith, daily prayer, fasting, Hajj and Zakat) obligatory for very Muslim to go through it. The Ramzan is very indispensable in its nature because of its essence spiritually, physically, socially and mentally. This month is very important because the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) received, the holy Quran verses as revelation from Allah and the first battle of Islam took place (Batte of Badar) in this month. In Quran Majeed in verses (2-183) Allah Says, O you believe fasting has been prescribed for you as it had been prescribed for those who came before you. So that you may guard yourself (against displeasing Allah). Fasting is very common practice in the other religions of the world but it could not be worthy because of its nature. In Hinduism which is one of the oldest religion in the world with a history of 4000 years

ago had history of fasting. It was called Ekdashi satyanaryan and Navatri. However Hindu fasting was usually done in the Month of Kartik. The Hindus women kept the fasting for their husbands sake. Similarly they had a ritual to eat everything even in fasting except the things baking in fire. The Christians had also fasting ritual in their religion. The Prophet Jesus (AS) fasted for 40 days before he received the Gospel. He ordered to his followers to fast 40 days but it does not happen now or very few people know about it. The other religion has also the same pattern like Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism however no religion had a concept like Islam which is the only, way to build close relation with Allah and fasting according to standard procedures universally. The thirty days in Ramzan plays crucial role in building conviction in Allah, killing of lust and power while abandon every act to be played on the guidelines and directives of Allah and his Messenger Mohammad (PBUH) directives. It is actually understanding the myth of life and submission to Allah wills to whom we all shall go back after death. However, besides fasting Ramzan plays important role psychologically, physiologically and scientifically and research on Ramzan is still in process. Although, the theme of the Roza is to understand clearly the issues and problems of starvation due to poverty and one may realize the true pain of poor's. The month of Ramzan tell us how can the poor should be help? In Surah Al-Baqra

Allah says in Ayat no 183, Those who believes in Allah, fasting is duty, on you as it was obligatory on the nations before you. So that you become asceticism. In Europe and most part of Asia even the month of Ramzan is welcome with great respect. The prices of daily commodities could be minimized and even in some countries food items could be supplied without any charges. The countries like Germany, Canada has credit to honor the Ramzan packages with special discount for the Muslim community. Some countries Heads even attend the Muslim Aftari and feel happiness moments with Muslim communities in the Mosques. Unfortunately in the Muslim countries majority of the Muslims turn the Month of Ramzan very expensive and troublesome for others. The prices of daily commodities go high and maximum of traders earn money through illegal practices. The Month of Ramzan is so pious and honorable for the Muslims that they, kept all the routine activities suspended. The fasting practices made the Muslims strong in beliefs and simple in habits as well. It shows the world how the Muslims worship in Allah could enhanced their beliefs to understand that only, Allah could forgive our sins and broader the range of our sight and vision to understand and know him as the creator of the world and hereafter. In the honour of month of Ramzan the Evils and Wicked bonded could be sent to cages so that Muslims could worship Allah freely.

PTI did not run any campaign, says Fawad

FROM PAGE 01

Chaudhry added that the chief minister should stop spreading hatred against a specific community. Reacting to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's statement, he said that the premier's statement is an attempt to create distance between the army and the nation. "PTI has neither run any campaign against the army chief nor is planning to do it. PTI respects the army chief." The PTI vice president said that Imran Khan thinks if the military becomes weak then it will also make the country weaker. He expressed hopes to bring politics to normalcy.

Technical reasons behind IMF delay

FROM PAGE 01

But this prompted further speculation and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi also demanded an explanation from the government. "I want to be categorical that there is absolutely no truth to this or any insinuated link between the past or current IMF supported programme and decision by any Pakistani government over its nuclear programme," the official said. In a statement today, the minister said his comments on the Senate's floor were in response to a colleague senator's specific question, wherein, he emphasised that Pakistan has a sovereign right to develop its nuclear program, as it best suits "our national interests, without any external dictation".

Imran politics harming...

FROM PAGE 01

Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) hospital, which he said was an appropriate answer to opponents. He claimed that no district of Punjab possessed a NICVD institution like Sukkur and that since the Sindh government ran NICVD in 2015, it was providing free treatment facilities and did not deny treatment to any deserving person. The minister also announced the establishment of a new hospital for free heart treatment in Landhi, saying that there was no such hospital in the whole world that could treat this number of patients for free. He added that the decision to die or live should not be based on financial circumstances. The foreign minister highlighted that today NICVD was the world's largest heart disease treatment hospital and satellite centers of NICVD were established in Hyderabad and Larkana on behalf of the Sindh government. Chairman PPP emphasized that the governments in Punjab and KP provide treatment for money while PPP is providing treatment for the service of humanity.

PSG slump to home defeat against Rennes

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's (PSG) quest towards another Ligue 1 title was hindered on Sunday as they went down 2-0 at home to Rennes, the second time Christophe Galtier's side have lost to the Brittany club in the final minute of the first half. Arnaud Kalimuendo made it 2-0 three minutes after the restart against the club he left in the last close season, as PSG slumped to the first home league defeat of the campaign. It is the Parisians' fourth Ligue 1 loss this season, all of them in 2023. They lost away to Rennes when the teams last met in January. The result means Marseille can cut PSG's lead at the top of the table to seven points if they win away to Reims in Sunday's late game. Qatar-owned PSG were knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich on March 9. - APP

Briefs

Australian soldier arrested over war crime

SYDNEY: The 41-year-old man, who was deployed in Afghanistan, is accused of having killed a civilian. A four-year investigation revealed that Australian special forces killed 39 unarmed civilians and prisoners in the country.

Australian authorities said on Monday they had arrested a former soldier for allegedly killing an Afghan civilian while deployed with Afghanistan's defence force.

The accused is expected to be charged in an Australian court with one count of war crime murder, which carries a maximum penalty of life in jail, the Australian Federal Police said in a statement. A four-year investigation in 2020 found that Australian special forces allegedly killed 39 unarmed prisoners and civilians in Afghanistan, with senior commanders reportedly forcing junior soldiers to kill defenceless captives in order to "blood" them for combat. Following the recommendations of the report, 19 current and former members of Australia's military were then referred to a special investigator to determine if there was sufficient evidence to prosecute. Australia was part of a NATO-led international force that trained Afghan security forces and fought the Taliban for two decades after Western-backed forces ousted the Islamist militants from power in 2001. More than 39,000 Australian troops served in Afghanistan and 41 were killed.—Agencies

Ukraine only has one chance

MOSCOW: With the US set to refocus attention on domestic issues next year, Ukraine may not get funding for continued military action, Czech President Petr Pavel has said. The former army officer said Kiev's armed forces may therefore have just one shot at conducting a major push against Russian troops. "The window of opportunity is open this year. After next winter, it will be extremely difficult to maintain the current level of aid," Pavel told the Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita.

"Ukraine will only have one attempt to launch a major counter-offensive," he added as quoted by the outlet on Monday. If it fails, "it will be extremely difficult to obtain funds for the next one." Pavel, a retired general who served as chair of the NATO Military Committee until 2018, predicted that US interest in aiding the Ukrainian army would likely dwindle in 2024. The political focus in the country will shift to the presidential campaign, and US-China relations are likely to be the top foreign policy issue. European nations will likely reduce their funding of Ukraine too, the politician predicted.—Agencies

Ukraine only has one chance

UN holds conference on global water crisis

NEW YORK: With water scarce in some places, in excess elsewhere, polluted or otherwise problematic, the United Nations addresses this week a global crisis that has been long overlooked even as the welfare of billions of people is at stake. "It's the first time in 46 years that the world comes together on the issue of water," said Henk Ovink, water issues special envoy for the Netherlands, which is co-organizing the UN Water Summit Wednesday through Friday along with Tajikistan. "It's now or never, as we say, a once in a generation opportunity," he told AFP. The last conference at this high level on the issue, which lacks a global treaty or a dedicated UN agency, was held in 1977 in Mar del Plata, Argentina. And the situation is dire. "We wrecked the hydrological cycle," said Ovink, adding that he has never been more worried. "We take too much water from our ground. We pollute the water that is left and there is now so much water in the air that it is impacting our environment.—APP

Armenia must abandon its aggressive rhetoric

Armenia, not forgetting its pattern of putting forward conditions, now interferes with the process of reintegration of the Armenian residents of Azerbaijan

NEWS DESK

BAKU: "We strongly condemn this military provocation of Armenia and demand that it abandons its increasingly aggressive rhetoric and stops taking steps that increase tension in the region," press-service of the Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said in response to the Armenia's military provocation on the Azerbaijani region bordering this country. "Armenia should stop abusing the presence of the European Union civilian monitoring mission in its territories to increase tensions in the region and cover up its military provocations," the ministry reported.

According to the information of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on March 20, one of the servicemen was injured from the fire of units of the armed forces of

Armenia located near the Nerkin-And settlement of Gafan region toward the positions of Border Troops of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan located on the Aghbasyurd heights of Zangilan region. To label the return of Azerbaijani IDPs to their homes as a "violation" of the Trilateral Statement and "illegal settlement" is yet another clear manifestation of hypocrisy by Armenia, which, in violation of international law and four UN Security Council resolutions, kept the territories of Azerbaijan under occupation for 30 years, forcibly expelled about 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homelands, and brutally destroyed all Azerbaijani historical and religious monuments in the region. This statement demonstrates Armenia's features of racial discrimination and hatred. At the same time, this statement demonstrates

that Armenia, a monoethnic state that has pursued a large-scale policy of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis for decades, has not refrained from the abhorrent goal pursued by the legal settlement of Armenians not only from its own territory, but also from the countries of the Middle East in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, as well as "Armenization" of Azerbaijani territories, and the goal of hindering the return of Azerbaijanis in every possible way. It should be noted that the reference to the settlements of the Republic of Azerbaijan by fictitious names is another manifestation of Armenia's territorial claims against Azerbaijan. It seems that Armenia, which has just become familiar with international law and the principle of respect for territorial integrity, should continue its enlightenment in this area. The Prague

and Sochi Statements demand Armenia to end its territorial claims against Azerbaijan, and to recognize and respect the latter's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nevertheless, the recently escalating rhetoric of the political leadership of Armenia, including the aforementioned statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, aggressive statements, especially the actions aimed directly at the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, demonstrate that Armenia yet another time does not intend to utilize the historical opportunity for peace.

The claim by Armenia that Azerbaijan, who initiated the signing of a peace treaty after the war of 2020, presented the 5 basic principles for building relations and the text of the peace agreement, is not interested in the peace agreement, is another obvious example of deception. It

is well known that Armenia, which did not respond to Azerbaijan's proposal to sign a peace agreement for more than a year, and then conditioned the signing of a peace agreement to the delimitation process that usually takes a long time, and to other destructive proposals, obstructs the peace treaty under various pretexts, exaggerating certain elements and creating confusion about its essence. With such statements, Armenia is trying to cover up its artificial delaying of the peace treaty negotiation process, as well as its recent blow to the process by refusing to attend the next round of negotiations in December 2022. As it is known, even before the 2020 war, from the first day Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan came to power, the chain of provocations committed by Armenia, both verbally and in action, undermined the negotiation process on the settlement of the former Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and

led to a serious increase in tension in the region. It is also well known that under the leadership of N.Pashinyan, Armenia adopted a military doctrine and a national security strategy that envisages the concept of "a new war for new territories" and defines the country's strategic goal in the negotiation process as preserving the results of the war and that after the July 2020 clashes, following the impunity syndrome, Armenia put forward 7 unjustified conditions against Azerbaijan. Armenia, not forgetting its pattern of putting forward conditions, now interferes with the process of reintegration of the Armenian residents of Azerbaijan. In order to prevent Azerbaijan's determined activity in the direction of conducting a dialogue with the Armenian residents, the Armenian side does provocations that induce the representatives of the Armenian residents to oppose the proposal of holding the next dialogue in Baku.

Medvedev threatens ICC with hypersonic missile

MOSCOW: Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev early on Monday threatened the International Criminal Court (ICC) with the use of a Russian hypersonic missile, amid the issuance of an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin.

"Alas, gentlemen, everyone walks under God and missiles. It is quite possible to imagine the targeted use of an Onyx hypersonic (missile) from a Russian ship in the North Sea against the Hague courthouse," Medvedev said in a statement on Telegram.

Medvedev claimed that international public law is defective, mainly due to its inefficiency as countries "do not want to implement biased acts of the UN General Assembly, veto decisions of the UN Security Council, or leave various UN institutions."

"The reason is their injustice, which is based on the inadmissibility of coercion by a group of sovereign countries of the same sovereign states. ... A sovereign power cannot exercise jurisdiction over another sovereign power," Medvedev also said.

Medvedev further alleged that ICC's decision to issue an arrest warrant for Putin will have "monstrous consequences for international law."

"This is the collapse of the foundations, the principles of law. Including the postulates of the inevitability of responsibility. "Now, no one will go to any international body, everyone will negotiate among themselves. All stupid decisions of the UN and other structures will burst at the seams. The gloomy decline of the entire system of international relations is coming. Trust is gone," he added.—DNA

Ancient pearl town discovered in UAE

DUBAI: Archaeologists say they have found the oldest pearling town in the Gulf on an island off one of the northern sheikhdoms of the United Arab Emirates.

Artefacts found in this town on Siniyah Island in Umm al-Quwain, likely once home to thousands of people and hundreds of houses, date as far back as the region's pre-Islamic history in the late sixth century. While older pearling towns have been mentioned in historical texts, this represents the first time archaeologists say they have physically found one from this ancient era across the nations of the Gulf. "This is the oldest example of that kind of very specifically Khaleeji pearling town," said Timothy Power, an associate professor of archaeology at the United Arab Emirates University, using a word that means "Gulf" in Arabic. "It's the spiritual ancestor of towns like Dubai." The pearling town sits on Siniyah Island, which shields the Khor al-Baida marshlands in Umm al-Quwain, an emirate 50km (30 miles) northeast of Dubai.—Agencies

Colombia suspends ceasefire with drug cartel

BOGOTA: Colombian President Gustavo Petro has suspended a ceasefire with the country's main drug trafficking cartel, the Gulf Clan. He accused it of "sowing anxiety and terror" and ordered the security forces to reactivate their military operations against the criminal gang. The ceasefire had been agreed in December as part of the president's plan for "total peace" in Colombia. Its suspension is a major blow to Mr Petro's attempt to end armed conflict. His policy is radically different from that from his predecessor in office, Iván Duque, who tried to secure peace by stepping up military operations against Colombia's illegal armed groups. Mr Petro is instead trying to negotiate an end of hostilities with dozens of criminal organisations. On 31 December 2022, the government had announced that it had reached a bilateral ceasefire with the Gulf Clan as well as rebels of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissidents from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) among others.—APP

PNS NASR carrying relief supplies arrives at Turkiye

DNA

ANKARA: Pakistan Navy Ship PNS Nasr carrying earthquake relief assistance supplies, mainly wintered tents (1800) and blankets (22000) arrived at Mersin Port today. Ship was received by Governor Mersin Mr. Ali Hamza Pehlivan, Ambassador of Pakistan to Türkiye Dr. Yousaf Junaid, Deputy Governor Ibrahim Kuçuk, Mersin Emniyet Müdürü, Mehmet Aslan, Turkish dignitaries and representatives from media. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Yousaf Junaid stated that Pakistan & Türkiye are knitted together in strong bonds of friendship & brotherhood. Both countries have common history & heritage & envisage a shared future. Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with Türkiye in these difficult times and together will emerge stronger from the devastation caused by earthquakes. In his statement, Governor Mersin Mr. Ali Hamza Pehlivan said that



exemplary solidarity from Pakistan highlights that hearts of Pakistani people beat with the hearts of Turkish brothers. He thanked the people and government of Pakistan for swift response and solidarity with Türkiye in this difficult time. Commander PNS Nasr, Commodore Sohail Ahmed Azmie stated

that with its resilience and strength, Turkish nation will overcome this disaster very soon. Under the directions of the Prime Minister, an air bridge was immediately established between Islamabad and Ankara on 6th February 2023 to transport rescue teams and deliver essential relief goods. Since

then, earthquake relief supplies are being transported to brotherly Türkiye through air, land and sea earthquake relief supplies, primarily 50,000 tents, a chartered air operation is currently in progress. On average three flights a day are bringing much needed tents to the earthquake affected region.

US supplying weapons to Russia-Ukraine battlefield

BEIJING: As Chinese President Xi Jinping began his official visit to Russia, Beijing on Monday blamed the US for "fanning" the Russia-Ukraine war. "It is not China that supplies weapons to the battlefield of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but the US," Wang Wenbin, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, told a news conference in Beijing.

Xi landed in Moscow on an official visit from Monday until Wednesday, marking his first overseas trip since being reelected as president for a third term early this month. Wang was responding to US-sourced reports that alleged "rounds of Chinese ammunition" were used in battlefields on Ukraine. Japan's Kyodo News claimed over the past weekend that the US "suspects" the Chinese ammunition rounds "were fired by Russian forces." "Whether the ammunition was supplied by China remains unclear," Kyodo quoted US administration sources. "It's something that we are vigilant about and continuing to watch carefully," an unnamed US State Department official told Kyodo.

"The US should stop fanning the flames and pointing fingers and end coercion toward other countries. The US should play a constructive role on the Ukraine crisis, not the other way around," Wang was quoted as saying by daily Global Times. On the arrest warrants against Russian President Vladimir Putin issued by the International Criminal Court, he said: "The International Criminal Court should maintain an objective stance, respect the immunity of heads of state from jurisdiction under international law and avoid double standards." The ICC on Friday said its Pre-Trial Chamber II issued arrest warrants for Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, presidential commissioner for children's rights, in the "context of the situation in Ukraine." —Agencies

UK Home Secretary faces hostile return

LONDON: One of Britain's most senior ministers came under fire Monday for laughing uproariously in front of a future migrant camp and asking for tips on interior design during a trip to Rwanda. Home Secretary Suella Braverman was also criticised for taking only right-leaning media outlets on the weekend trip, refusing access to the BBC's London reporters and more liberal newspapers that have attacked her plan to resettle asylum seekers in Rwanda. Britain's Conservative government is seeking to outlaw asylum claims by all illegal arrivals and transfer them to "safe" third countries, such as Rwanda, in a bid to stop thousands of migrants from crossing the Channel on small boats. Rejecting criticism of Rwanda's human rights record, Braverman said it would be a "blessing" for would-be refugees to be permanently resettled there instead of in Britain. "I encourage all of my critics to actually visit Rwanda before they cast aspersions and throw around incredibly prejudiced and snobbish opinions about what this beautiful country has to offer," she said, according to British media. In an interview with right-wing broadcaster GB News, she said accommodation and construction projects in Rwanda were "well advanced" and nearing completion.—APP

Thai PM dissolves parliament, calls election

BANGKOK: Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha dissolved parliament on Monday, setting up a general election in May as the former coup leader seeks to extend army-backed rule. The vote pits unpopular former army chief Prayut, who came to power in a 2014 putsch, against the daughter of billionaire former PM Thaksin Shinawatra, who still casts a shadow over the kingdom's political scene despite more than a decade in exile. The main opposition Pheu Thai group, fronted by Paetongtarn Shinawatra, is polling

strongly but Thailand's junta-scripted 2017 constitution will make it hard for her to secure the top job. A statement in the official Royal Gazette published on Monday announced the dissolution, and the Election Commission will confirm the date of the poll later, with May 7 or 14 tipped as most likely. The election is the second since the 2014 coup and the first since the country was rocked by massive, youth-led pro-democracy protests in Bangkok in 2020. Unofficial campaigning has been under way for weeks, with rising living costs and the kingdom's sluggish recovery

from the coronavirus pandemic high on the agenda. Prayut, speaking after the announcement, declined to say whether he was satisfied with his tenure, telling reporters: "I cannot answer, you have to ask the people." The 68-year-old, who cemented his rule in a controversial election in 2019, has demonstrated a longevity rare in Thai politics. But in a poll published Sunday of who voters would like to see as PM, Prayut lagged in third place on just over 15 percent – way behind front runner Paetongtarn on 38 percent. In the same poll of 2,000 people, conducted by the National Institute of

Development Administration, nearly 50 percent said they would vote Pheu Thai, with Prayut's United Thai Nation party on around 12 percent. Pheu Thai has said it is targeting a big victory to prevent the military establishment from blocking its route to power – avoiding a repeat of 2019 when it won the most seats but was shut out of government. Under the army-drafted 2017 constitution, the prime minister is chosen by the 500 elected lower-house MPs as well as 250 military-appointed senators. "I have a strong hope that we can form the government for sure," Paetongtarn told reporters at a rally.—APP

RCGI concerns on closure of Poultry Industry

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Poultry sector is under severe pressure due to increase in production cost. Currently sixty percent of poultry farms have been closed resulting in job loss. The government should work on cultivation of soybeans at the local level so that dependence on imports is reduced. These views were expressed by Saqib Rafiq, President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, while addressing the meeting of the Standing Committee on Poultry in the Chamber house. He said that the Rawalpindi Chamber had raised the issue of import ban and containers stuck at the port at all levels, and the government should take steps to reduce the cost of production. RCGI President Saqib Rafique and Chairman Dr. Farhan Farooq presided over the meeting. Issues related to the poultry sector were discussed in the meeting. The committee expressed concerns over the increase in cost of production,



non-availability of chicken meat due to inflation and recommended that the government should provide incentives and tax exemptions

to promote local machinery/plants for import substitution. Chairman Farhan Farooq welcomed the suggestions from the committee

members. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shehzad, former Presidents

Raja Amer Iqbal, Malik Shahid Saleem, committee members and members of RCGI were also present in the meeting.

Briefs

Petrol price to go down by Rs100, says Musadik

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum Division Dr Musadik Malik has said that the poor people of the country will get cheaper petrol as the government has decided to cut the POL prices for low-income group of society. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Monday, the state minister said that the difference between the petrol prices for the low-income group and the rich would be Rs100/litre. He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered to implement this decision immediately. We will implement the 'cheap petrol' decision within six weeks. He said that the motorcyclists would be provided cheap petrol while people having big cars would buy petrol at higher rates. He said that he told the prime minister that we had two countries in Pakistan: one for the poor and the other for the rich. He said that PM Shehbaz and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif instructed him that "if that is the case then you should stand by the poor". He said that the government has separated the tariff for the rich and the poor. "Our leadership has lowered the gas tariff for the poor people by four times since January. We also respect the rich. But they will have to pay four times more. And we will utilize this money to provide gas to the poor," he added. The minister said that like gas tariff, PM Shehbaz and Nawaz Sharif also asked him to separate the petrol rates for the poor and the rich. He said that yesterday media reported that the petrol price for the low income groups would be lowered by Rs50/litre.

Yemen warring parties agree prisoner swap

DUBAI: Yemen's Huthi rebels and the internationally recognised government have agreed at talks in Switzerland to swap more than 880 prisoners, both sides said Monday as efforts accelerate to end the war. The agreed exchange comes after Saudi Arabia and Iran, who back opposing sides in the conflict, this month moved towards restoring diplomatic ties after a seven-year rupture. "An agreement has been reached to implement a (prisoner) swap" that will see more than 880 people released in total, said Abdul Qader al-Murtada, the leading Huthi delegate to the talks in Bern, according to the rebel's Al-Masirah TV channel. The exchange is set to take place within weeks, he said. UN special envoy Hans Grundberg told the UN Security Council last week that there were intense diplomatic efforts at different levels to end the fighting. The exchange of about 15,000 conflict-related detainees has been under discussion as a key confidence-building measure under a December 2018 UN-mediated deal known as the Stockholm Agreement. - APP

PTI leader among seven killed in gun attack

DNA

ABBOTTABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Tehsil Chairman from Havelian Atif Munsif was among the seven killed in a targeted gun attack on his vehicle on Monday. Atif Munsif was reportedly on his way home when unknown attackers opened fire at his vehicle in the village of Langra resulting in his death, his four security guards, and three other workers. The assailants also fired a rocket at the vehicle which burnt the vehicle and gutted the dead bodies, confirmed District Police Officer (DPO) Umar Tufail. Police have launched an investigation into the incident.

Japan vows additional \$5.58 mln for weather forecasting

Pakistan is prone to natural disasters such as floods and landslides caused by heavy torrential rains, tropical cyclones and earthquakes. This results in heavy damages, particularly, due to floods triggered by monsoon rains

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan decided to increase the amount of a grant aid for "the Project for Installation of Weather Surveillance Radar in Multan" from 2.042 billion Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 14.99 million USD) to 2.8 billion Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 20.57 million USD). The original Notes to this effect were signed and exchanged between two governments on 31 August 2018. Responding to the request from the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, this time, the Government of Japan decided to provide additional amount of 760 million Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 5.58 million USD) for this project. The Notes to this effect for provision of additional amount were signed and exchanged between Mr. ITO Takeshi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs Pakistan is prone to natural disasters such



as floods and landslides caused by heavy torrential rains, tropical cyclones and earthquakes. This results in heavy damages, particularly, due to floods triggered by monsoon rains. The Japanese government has been assisting Pakistan proactively, in

the enhancement of weather surveillance capacity since the 1980s, in order to mitigate the damage by flood. Including the additional amount pledged today, the total amount of Japanese assistance for weather surveillance radars in Pakistan has reached about 11.3 billion Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 82.9 million USD). So far Japan has supported the installation of 6 weather radars in the cities of Islamabad, Karachi, Dera Ismail Khan, Rahim Yar Khan, Multan (ongoing) and Sukkur (ongoing) and will cover 80% of the country and benefit 90% of the whole population. The weather radar network will surely contribute to further strengthening the weather forecasting capability in Pakistan and help Pakistan become more resilient to future natural disasters. In the signing ceremony, Mr. Ito stated, "This project will enhance PMD's capabilities, it will be able to disseminate information and deliver more accurate weather forecast, it will be able to send out warnings to protect life and properties of the people in Pakistan. The whole population of the country will be benefitted."

EU hails Türkiye, UN for grain deal extension

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Monday lauded Türkiye and the UN for securing an extension to the Black Sea grain deal. The agreement "has been prolonged and congratulations to the UN and Türkiye for this diplomatic effort," Borrell told reporters before a meeting of EU foreign ministers. "Let's hope that this will be implemented efficiently and without delays," he added. Türkiye, the UN, Russia, and Ukraine signed a deal in Istanbul last July to resume grain exports from three Ukrainian ports that were blocked after the war began in February. The agreement was extended for a second time on Saturday for 120 days, just before it was due to expire on the same day. If there are any issues in the implementation, "the consequences will be counted in the losses of human lives," Borrell warned, referring to the growing risk of a global food shortage. He also hailed the extension as "good news" for Ukraine and its agricultural exports. -Agencies

IMF trashes any 'nuclear' condition to Pakistan deal

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has trashed speculations that the global lender had attached any conditions to Pakistan's nuclear programme as part of the ninth review of the IMF-supported \$7 billion loan programme. The IMF statement coincided with remarks of Commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM) General Michael E Kurilla during a testimony before the US Senate Arms Services Committee in which expressed satisfaction regarding Pakistan nuclear security procedures. Stating that there was "absolutely no truth" to any such insinuations, IMF Resident Representative Esther Perez Luiz declared that discussions with the Pakistani authorities have exclusively focused on economic policies to address the country's economic and balance of payments issues which were as per the Fund's mandate. The IMF official said there had never been any talk on Pakistan's nuclear assets. "Nothing was discussed in the past nor is was on the table now," the official added. Perez Luiz outrightly denied speculations that the lender has put pressure on Pakistan's nuclear programme during the talks for the ninth review under IMF-supported programme. "Our discussions have exclusively focused on economic policies to solve Pakistan's economic and balance of payments problems, in line with the IMF's mandate for promoting macroeconomic and financial stability," the statement added. Earlier on March 17, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Fawad Chaudhry had alleged that the IMF had asked Pakistan to halt its long-range missile programme. However, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had claimed that nobody in Pakistan can compromise on the nuclear and missile assets of the

country. "We are responsible citizens of Pakistan, we represent the people of Pakistan and we are here to guard the national interest of the country" he had said while addressing the Senate Committee of Whole last week. Ishaq Dar had assured the senators that details of the staff-level agreement with the IMF will be made public. He had said once the staff agreement is signed, it will be put on the website of the Finance Ministry and nothing will be concealed. "Nobody has any right to tell Pakistan what range of missiles it can have and what nuclear weapons it can have. We have to have our own deterrence," said Dar. It is for the first time that the finance minister had brought the issue of the range of nuclear missiles into the public sphere. Dar assured that "nobody is going to compromise anything on the nuclear or missile programme of Pakistan - no way". - DNA

198 PTI workers held over vandalism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have arrested as many as 198 workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for attacking police and vandalising public property. Raids for further arrests are underway. The suspects are being ascertained with the help of CCTV cameras. Islamabad police had registered cases at Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Golra police stations over violent incidents by the PTI workers. At least 58 police officials were injured due to stone pelting and vandalism by the PTI workers during protests. Four vehicles and 25 motorcycles of police were burnt while nine police vehicles were vandalised. "All the miscreants involved in the violent acts will be brought to justice," the police vowed. As many as 102 PTI workers arrested during the Zaman Park police operation have been produced in an ATC in Lahore. The duty judge had granted one-day physical remand of these workers. Police will request further physical remand of the accused. Strict security arrangements were ensured during the production of the accused. Earlier, PTI leader Shibli Faraz on Monday appeared in an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad on a wheelchair. A case had been registered against Shibli Faraz under terrorism provisions. Shibli Faraz appeared in the court of judge Raja Jawad Abbas. In addition, an ATC in Islamabad approved the interim bail of PTI leaders including Asad Umar, Raja Khurram, Ali Nawaz, Murad Saeed, Shehzad Waseem and Zulfi Bukhari in the case of attack on judicial complex and damage to public property during Imran Khan's court appearance.

Indian state extends internet ban in hunt for Sikh leader

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian authorities extended a mobile internet blackout across a state of about 30 million people on Monday as police hunted a Sikh preacher. The blackout extension came as supporters of Amritpal Singh were filmed vandalising India's consulate in San Francisco, not long after similar disturbances in London. Authorities in the northern state of Punjab launched a major search on Saturday for Singh, who has risen to prominence in recent months demanding the creation of Khalistan, a separate Sikh homeland. Police said on Monday they had arrested 114 people so far but Singh's whereabouts were unknown. The internet outage, originally in place until noon (0630 GMT) on Monday, was extended for another 24 hours. Videos posted online, and independently verified by AFP, showed men smashing doors and windows of the Indian Consulate in San Francisco after they broke down barricades set up outside the building.

Karachi's covid positivity ratio soars to 28.30pc

ISLAMABAD: The COVID-19 positivity ratio in Karachi has reached an alarming level of 28.30 percent, the highest in the country, media reported on Monday. According to details shared by the sources, the positivity ratio in Karachi jumped to 28.30 pc in last 24 hours, while the positivity ratio remained 100 per cent in Hyderabad and Swabi. During the last 24 hours, only a single test was conducted in Swabi and Hyderabad, which remained positive. In addition, the Covid positivity ratio in Islamabad was recorded as 12.20pc while Peshawar's was 14.29pc. The sources further say, no Covid case was reported in Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Quetta, Abbottabad, Mardan, Banu, Swat, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, Nowshera, Gujranwala, Multan, Rawalpindi, Sargodha and other major cities of the country. - APP

Mankani: US Mission's "Woman of Courage"

ISLAMABAD: U.S. Mission Pakistan Deputy Chief of Mission Andrew Schofer named Pakistani midwife Neha Mankani as U.S. Mission Pakistan's 2023 "Woman of Courage" at an event commemorating Women's History Month on March 20. Mankani, an alumna of the U.S. government-funded Fulbright Program, established the Mama Baby Fund in 2019 to support new mothers who could not afford prenatal and postnatal care. In fall 2022, she and her team courageously stepped in to serve pregnant women and babies in need in Sindh Province. She traveled to internally displaced people camps to provide prenatal care and kits to help ensure safe deliveries. "Neha exemplifies leadership, courage, and strength, and we're so pleased to see one of our Fulbright Program alumna making such a strong contribution to her country," Schofer said. Mankani commented, "In all of the climate-affected communities I have worked

in - from the coastal islands of Karachi to displaced flood-affected communities in Sindh and Balochistan - it is very clear that climate change and complex emergencies affect women and children very differently. Imagine all of the vulnerabilities of being pregnant, in labor, or postpartum, having a newborn, and add to that displacement, a struggling health system, food insecurity and being away from your community. The Mama Baby Fund emergency response and our community-based programs are centered around these gaps. Thank you to the U.S. Embassy for this recognition, for its support for flood-affected communities, and for continuing to raise awareness of the continuing humanitarian needs after the floods." - DNA

United States sponsors Innovation Expo in Islamabad

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad on March 19 concluded the "U.S.-Pakistan Innovation Expo" to showcase the success stories of U.S. government-sponsored Pakistani startups and to encourage further investment in them. The two-day expo provided a platform for established startups to showcase their business ideas and prototypes, and network with potential U.S. and Pakistani venture capitalists and investors. In his opening remarks at the event, U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome said, "One of the top priorities of the U.S. government is promoting inclusive economic growth and increasing trade and investment between the United States and Pakistan. The United States is already Pakistan's largest export market and every year we are seeing more and more U.S. investment come to Pakistan - but there is still room to grow and entrepreneurs like you are central to that effort. Pakistan is a country with immense potential, but it needs innovation and technology to take it to the next level." Since 2012, the U.S. Embassy has funded over 181 entrepreneurship-related projects valued at \$14.7 million dollars. He was joined by Chief Executive Officer

at Ignite National Technology Fund, Asim Shahryar, who acknowledged the efforts of the U.S. government in supporting entrepreneurial activities in Pakistan. Senior Advisor for the Asia Foundation Pakistan, Haris Qayyum, expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Embassy and National Incubation Center to highlight success of Pakistani startups. He further stated, "The U.S.-Pakistan In-



novation Expo is an endorsement of Pakistan's dynamic tech entrepreneurs. It exemplifies Pakistan-U.S. bilateral trade, foreign direct investment, and technological innovation. The Asia Foundation is committed to the collaborative efforts supporting Pakistan's tech ecosystem, as we continue. The Asia Foundation is honored to partner on initiatives that value entrepreneurship and innovation. It is our goal to support Pakistan's sustainable development and inclusive growth." The Expo featured a speaker session for venture capitalists and angel investors led by an American expert. Business leaders and investors from Pakistan, the Middle East, and the United States attended the event and discussed the opportunities and challenges in the Pakistani startup ecosystem. Project Director at the National Incubation Center, Parvez Abbasi said, "I am thrilled to see the U.S.-Pakistan Innovation Expo come to fruition. This event is a demonstration of the power of collaboration between our two nations and the endless possibilities that arise when we combine our talents and resources. I am grateful to all the participants and organizers who have made this expo a success and look forward to seeing the incredible innovations that will emerge from this partnership." The delegates at the Expo showed great enthusiasm for the event and expressed confidence that it would encourage further investment opportunities and potential trade partnerships between United States and Pakistan. They expressed their desire to see more initiatives like this in the future that support and grow Pakistan's startup ecosystem.